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ABSTRACT

Vocational education can contribute to the creation of new jobs through educational programs for employers or prospective employers and through collaborative efforts with community leaders. Local leadership is the most essential ingredient in successful job creation programs at the community level. Local leaders can work to obtain baseline information about the community relating to its economic health, the extent and character of its unemployment and underemployment, its available resources, and its education and training programs: identify the community goals and objectives to which vocational education can contribute; and define the joint responsibilities of civic, business, industry, and educational leaders. At the same time, state leaders need to work with local education and community leaders to implement programs. State leaders have several functions to perform: (1) planning with local leaders, (2) linking the efforts of others to build on prior successes, and (3) coordinating the various services and resources available at the state and local levels. State-level coordination provides a number of advantages over local education alone. These advantages are a minimum of lead time for training, more reading available start-up training, and wider program accessibility. (MN)

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JOB CREATION: THE ROLE OF LOCAL AND STATE LEADERS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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JOB CREATION: THE ROLE OF LOCAL AND STATE LEADERS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION*

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"Job creation" is a term which only recently has come into common use by vocational educators. National attention to the topic resulted from a 1978 National Conference on Job Creation and Development sponsored by the American Vocational Association and the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Ohio State University. That conference assembled leading theorists and practitioners in the area of job creation and vocational education, and resulted in considerable discussion and sharing of ideas.

This interest in the role which vocational education can play in job creation has come at a time of increasing concern regarding the nation's economy and the role which various sectors of society can play in improving our national economic well being (Meyer, 1977). Today's presentations at this session of the 1980 AVA Convention are evidence of this continuing concern.

Dimensions of Job Creation

Two major dimensions are involved in determining job creation in the context of vocational education. First, vocational education can contribute to the creation of new jobs through educational programs for employers or prospective employers. These people (entrepreneurs) may be owners of large and small businesses or owners and managers of farms. Vocational education can contribute to the success of small business operators and farmers, and this is frequently manifested when employers hire additional people to work in their enterprises. This constitutes "job creation."

Second, jobs are created through collaborative efforts by vocational education and community leaders. These efforts frequently result in the establishment of new or expanded businesses and industries in the community. Such increases in economic activity generally contribute in major

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ways to community development and improvement in the quality of life. Mississippi, Oklahoma, and South Carolina are among the leading states in this approach to job creation through vocational education.

What Local Leaders Can Do

A major thesis of this paper is that local leadership is the most essential ingredient in successful job creation programs at the community level. Although other expertise is needed from state, federal, and other private sources, initial local leadership must be exerted and must be continuous for long-term success to occur.

What can local leaders do about (a) obtaining baseline information about the community? (b) identifying community goals and objectives to which vocational education can contribute? and (c) defining joint responsibilites of civic, business, industry, and educational leaders? Prerequisites to developing and implementing a plan of action are presented in this section.

Getting Baseline Information About the Community

Although much of the information needed may be available from state or county governments, local leaders must take the initiative to determine the current status of the community. Basic descriptive information is needed regarding the economic health of the community, the extent and character of unemployment and underemployment, available resources, and available education and training programs.

Economic Health. The community may be defined as a city, a small town and surrounding countryside, or a group of counties containing several small towns. Statistics should be compiled on factors such as median income compared to state and national figures, volume of private investment, recent growth rates compared to state and national averages, and recent and projected supply and demand for workers. These statistics will indicate whether or not the local community is growing, holding its own, or declining economically.

Extent and Character of Unemployment and Underemployment. An initial survey should be made of the current population by age, sex, and socio-economic groups in the commuity. For each group, information is needed regarding the percentage of unemployed people, the percentage of part-time workers in these groups, and the percentage of part-time workers who want full-time employment. Information in these areas will reveal much about groups to be served, the severity of existing problems, and the potential priorities.

Available Resources. Two basic types of information about available resources need to be identified: (1) what resources are available? and (2) what resources are being used? Within these two categories, a systematic checklist is needed of the various kinds of potential support, especially local, that could be used.

Education and Training Programs. Existing programs of education, vocational education, and training by CETA, other government agencies, or industry should be inventoried. The degree to which existing programs meet present needs can be determined by comparing the total needs against the education and training programs being provided. These comparisons make it possible to determine what part of the total task is being accomplished and what new education and training programs need to be implemented. This information also represents an important basis for priority setting by local leaders.

Identifying Community Goals and Objectives to Which Vocational Education Can Contribute

Based upon employment data and local demand for more workers, a likely goal or objective for a community would be to train employees in specific occupational areas. Programs to accomplish this objective may or may not be in existence.

A job creation goal might be to support new and expanding industry and to strengthen small businesses. These are major avenues by which vocational education can help realize community economic goals.

In addition to basic needs for training employees and entrepreneurs, broader community goals may also be very appropriate for vocational education to address. Specifically, social goals which vocational education could help achieve include education of the handicapped, the disadvantaged, and individuals for employment in nontraditional occupations.

Meeting differing educational needs of community members and groups may represent another goal. Individuals vary with respect to aptitudes, experiences, and skills. Vocational education can make an important contribution to the general level of education.

Vocational education can contribute to other educational goals and objectives of the community. For example, vocational instructors could provide "practical arts" instruction to help individuals be better consumers, equip them for do-it-yourself activities, and avocational activities.

Vocational education has contributed to all the above goals and objectives in communities throughout the country for many years. To the extent communty goals and objectives can be made explicit and to the extent vocational education's contribution to achieving them can also be made explicit, the bond between vocational education and community economic development will be strengthened.

Defining Joint Responsibilities of Civic, Business, Industry, and Educational Leaders

The formation of local development corporations, as described by Lund (1980), represents one approach to clarifying responsibilites and coordinating efforts. The formation of informal advisory groups would be another means of defining joint responsibilities.

Arrangements for coordinating vocational education and job creation efforts need to be specified. What is the role of local government? How should voluntary organizations and civic groups be involved? What part should business and industrial leaders assume? What should vocational educators and school administrators contribute?

The decision as to who does what, where authority is assigned, and who assumes specific responsibilities for job creation and economic development represent an important basis for subsequent planning and action. Responsibility needs to be assigned and clearly understood as to who determines the effectiveness of coordination as well as total program evaluation.

A major resource in local communities is represented by voluntary organizations. Much of the creativity and human energy for community growth and economic progress rests with committed civic leaders and their constituents.

In summary, stocktaking regarding responsibility for tasks will help each leadership group define its activities and responsibilities from a fresh, broad perspective. Defining joint responsibilities will:

1. Reveal needs and gaps,
2. Suggest opportunities for collaboration between certain groups and programs, and
3. Lay the foundation for a clear and compelling strategy for the future.

What State Leaders Can Do

State level vocational education leaders must work with leaders of other departments of state government and with business and industry in order to be effective in job creation activities. At the same time, state leaders need to work with local education and community leaders to put programs into action. Thus, state leaders have several functions to perform: (a) planning with local leaders, (b) linking the efforts of others to build on prior successes, and (c) coordinating the various services and resources available at the state and local levels.

Planning for Job Creation with Local Leaders

State leaders in vocational education need a clear sense of which school districts and communities are most interested in working together to spur job creation and economic development. Most successful efforts within communities have been supported by state educational, business, industry, and governmental leaders.

Early planning efforts should involve state government representatives of the Department of Education, the Department of Commerce and Economic Development, the Department of Agriculture, and, if possible, interested state legislators. Meetings between individuals from these agencies and local leaders can provide the essential early planning and involvement to help assure success.

Evidence of successful state level planning in West Virginia is typified by a recent statement made by Governor John D. Rockefeller IV:

> The program of vocational education has proved to be a vital link in the chain of economic development in West Virginia. Vocational education provides the skills needed by the people of our state to become productively employed, and provides the training essential for business and industry to remain competitive. (American Vocational Association, Position Papers.)

The governor and state legislators can provide the financial support needed for school and community economic development cooperation. In fact, states can and sometimes do mandate dollars for local economic development, and vocational education should be a vital part of the process. State leaders can focus on industrial and business recruitment. The perceived "business climate" is a major factor in states in which industries are considering locating. To the degree that vocational education can become an active participant in local economic development with state support, the business climate is likely to be enhanced.

Linking National, State, and Local Efforts

Stuart Rosenfeld (1980) distinguishes between the objectives of educational policy and economic policy while emphasizing the need for cautious efforts to bridge the two separate policies to enhance the economic development of communities. With regard to vocational education, he emphasizes that

> . . .federal legislation does little to encourage a direct connection between vocational education and local economic development and . . .given this lack of national level encouragement, vocational education is not even coming close to realizing its considerable potential as a force for the rejuvenation of economically troubled communities and as an effective bridge between local education and local economic development. (Rosenfeld, 1980, p. 7)

State and local leaders, frequently with the assistance of state and federal funding, lay the groundwork for economic development and job creation. Rosenfeld states:

> The improvement of transportation, sewage systems, health care and the construction of industrial parks are obviously designed to set the stage for both. Although these efforts may not, in and of themselves, attract new industry, they are viewed as the necessary pre-conditions to accompany the direct economic incentives. (Rosenfeld, 1980, p. 20)

Vocational education is increasingly assuming an important role in the efforts of states to enhance economic development and job creation in communities. State leaders need to play a major role in linking or bringing together the best information available as to how to proceed. The information provided in the "Recommended Readings" at the conclusion of this paper should be of major assistance to state leaders.

The papers by Rosenfeld provides an excellent summary of various federal programs and legislation which support local economic development. Vocational education leaders should be knowledgeable of these federal programs which represent both educational and economic initiatives through different branches of the federal government.

The following descriptions of state-initiated efforts in job creation and economic development illustrate the kinds of activities which may be useful in your state. It is important to keep in mind that the success of state programs is dependent upon local educational and community leaders who put programs into operation.

Texas. The Out-Of-School Youth Cooperative Training Program was started in 1972 by leaders in the Texas Education Agency. This program was designed to address the problems of youth unemployment, school dropouts, and job creation. Program participants were between the ages of 16 and 21 and a school dropout for at least six months.

Follow-up statistics on program participants after five years indicated that many jobs had been created in the industrial sector as a result of the program. Many part-time jobs that were created as a service to the students evolved into full-time, permanent positions.

> Cumulative statistics since 1972 show that 4,371 students have been enrolled in the program with over 80% of that number successfully placed on the job. Of the 3,514 students placed in employment, 2,833 or 80.6% are still employed. In addition to the employment figures, 418 students have received regular high school diplomas and another 577 have completed their GED. (Patterson)

Oklahoma. In 1967 the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education began budgeting resources and staff to support industrial and economic growth. In early 1968, in order to give concentrated attention to this state priority, permanent vocational education staff members were assigned to specialize in economic and industrial development.

Later in 1968, state vocational education leaders indicated to the governor, his planning staff, and the Department of Industrial Development that vocational education would like to assume reponsibility for training the initial labor force for new and expanding industries in Oklahoma. They established a Special Schools Division specifically committed to train employees for new and expanding industries.

Since the program began, over 25,000 individuals have been trained and about 85 percent were subsequently employed in new or expanding industries. The training program and curriculum are designed to meet the specifications of the industry. Trainees are exposed only to those skills required to do the job when they are employed. Some companies put trainees on the payroll while they undergo training which is jointly planned by the vo-tech staff and industry representatives. Other companies require rather elborate preemployment training but virtually assure employment to everyone who satisfactorily completes the program.

The Oklahoma program was funded by the State Legislature and is utilized by the state's Industrial Development Department as a major selling point to outside industries, emphasizing the availability of state-supported vocational training. The program in Oklahoma is conducted in comprehensive high schools, area vocational schools, community colleges, technical institutes, rented facilities, and actual plant sites.

State leaders in Oklahoma are meeting their responsibilites for job development. It is now accepted that this is a normal role for vocational education. It is a role which brings positive results for the State Board for Vocational Education, state staff members, trainees in the program, companies hiring the trainees, and the budget officers and legislators of the state. (Tuttle and Wall, 1979)

Mississippi. The industry services program in Mississippi was initiated in 1973 with the assignment of a staff member to work half-time in initiating the industry services program. As the program grew, the staff increased to four full-time employees and it is projected that ten people will be needed to operate the program by 1981. In the first five years of operation, the Mississippi program trained employees for more than 60 industries. (Tuttle and Wall, 1979)

The three major purposes of the Mississippi industry services program are as follows:

1. Job Training provides industry with a trained labor force and enables citizens in the community to acquire the skills necessary to enter new or better jobs. Program characteristics which contribute to successful job training include high quality personnel, good coordination between industry, public agencies, and other parts of the community, and a close correlation of job training efforts with community and business needs.

2. Job creation takes place as occupational opportunities in the community expand through industrial recruitment and expansion, and through the associated expansion of sales and services. Long-term community growth and progress depend in large part upon promoting the stability and growth of existing industries in addition to attracting new industries.

3. Job placement comprises the various activities carried out to place people in jobs, once trained. The success of job training and job creation depends upon job placement.

South Carolina. The 1962 Code of Laws of South Carolina, Volume 5, established South Carolina's State Committee for Technical Education, now known as the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education. Its purpose is to assist the people of South Carolina in upgarding their technical and industrial skills. In addition, it was established to provide existing and new industry with a trained, initial labor force on a no-cost basis. The state has established sixteen technical education campuses which are geographically dispersed throughout the State.

The Industrial Services Division of the State Board is staffed with industrial engineers, methods analysts, recruiters, and trainers. The state maintains an equipment pool from which numerous special educational programs are set up for companies. South Carolina officials assist industries in analyzing their needs; developing a master plan; developing a schedule for recruiting, testing, selecting, and training activities; making decisions about training sites; assisting in the orderly transfer of key personnel; recruiting employees locally; screening and testing applicants; and conducting training.

The entire planning, recruiting, selecting, and training operation is accomplished without cost to industries. This approach represents the state's commitment to support job creation and economic development in South Carolina.

Coordinating Services and Resources

State level coordination of job creation initiatives can strengthen the efforts of individual communities. A useful starting point would be for state vocational education leaders to inventory the services and resources which are available from the Department of Commerce and Economic Development, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Vocational and Technical Education, and business and industry.

This inventory of services and resources can then be provided to local leaders who are ready to launch job creation and economic development efforts. The state vocational education leaders serve as liasison to match state resources with local needs. State leaders can work jointly with local vocational education and community leaders in identifying specific objectives, developing agreements, and preparing a schedule of activities to be completed.

State level coordination provides a number of advantages over local initiatives alone. They are:

1. Training may be provided with a minimum of lead time when a local school system has not budgeted for such training.
2. Start-up training can often be performed more readily by an industry services program than by local schools which may have most of their resources committed to ongoing vocational programs.
3. Flexible and high quality programs can be made available anywhere in the state's boundaries. Training can be provided to any section of the state without limitations of varying abilities of communities to support the program.

Conclusion

I hope some of these ideas will be helpful to you in taking a more direct leadership role in job creation and economic development. Vocational education leadership is essential at local and state levels throughout the process.

Let's continue to develop the possibilities!

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